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SUBJECT: HAITI ELECTIONS: KEY TASKS AND DEADLINES

11. Summary: This message summarizes the main logistical tasks to be completed in preparation for the Haitian elections scheduled for January 8 and February 19, 2006. The OAS and MINUSTAH report that 2.45 million of the 3,533,430 ID cards have arrived in Haiti. Card distribution is just beginning, but the OAS projects that it will finish by December 31. Two printers in the Dominican Republic have begun printing ballots and expect to finish printing by December 10 - 12. The CEP must hire and train roughly 40,000 poll workers for Election Day. The OAS began printing the 9,200 partial electoral lists December 5 and projects that it will finish printing December 17. The CEP, MINUSTAH and the Interim Government of Haiti must decide between two competing methods for transmitting results to Port-au-Prince for tabulation, satellite transmission or overland transport. Card distribution and poll workers training are the most critical aspects to watch. Incomplete card distribution could cause public confidence in elections to ebb and depress voter turnout while delayed poll-worker training would endanger the scheduled electoral dates. End Summary.

12. ID Cards

After repeated delay, MINUSTAH reported that the OAS began opening rural distribution centers December 2, but the first ID Card distribution centers in urban areas did not open until December 4. In urban areas with many voting sites, the OAS will affix stickers to the ID cards telling voters where to vote. However, the stickers did not arrive on time. As a stop-gap measure, the OAS purchased 100,000 stickers locally and began distribution at four large distribution centers in Port-au-Prince December 4. OAS elections chief Elizabeth Spehar reported that the first shipment of 1.5 million stickers arrived in Port-au-Prince December 5 and the OAS plans to open the remaining urban card distribution centers December 8. Spehar projects that the OAS will finish distribution by December 31. MINUSTAH elections officials, however, are skeptical. They complain that the OAS has no coherent plan for distribution and that equipment such as generators and solar panels in many of the former registration centers, now converted to distribution centers, needs to be repaired or replaced before distribution can begin.

Key Deadlines:

-- ASAP: Remaining stickers for cards arrive in Haiti
-- December 8: All card distribution centers open
-- December 20: All ID cards delivered to Haiti
-- December 31: ID Card distribution complete

Comment: The OAS has yet to achieve its peak distribution rate, which makes it difficult to assess whether it will finish distribution. However, incomplete distribution does not preclude an election. Each voting site will have a list with photographs of the voters assigned to it. Post has a copy of the draft text of a decree that would permit voting with registration receipts. However, incomplete distribution of id cards could detract from voter confidence.

13. Ballots

Ballot printing began in the Dominican Republic on November 123. The printers are contractually obligated to finish by December 14, though in a radio interview November 30, Haitian contractor Reginald Boulos said he expects to be finished by December 10 - 12. Boulos reported that all of the presidential ballots and all of the ballots for the departments of Grand Anse and Centre had been printed. He said the last ballot template, for a deputy race, arrived in the Dominican Republic November 30, clearing the way to complete all remaining printing. When finished, the CEP will transfer the ballots to Port-au-Prince, where MINUSTAH will store them until they are ready to be transported to the provinces for the first round.

Key Deadlines:

- December 15: All Ballots Finished and in Port-au-Prince
- December 16 - January 5: MINUSTAH transports ballots to departments
- January 6 - 7: UNPOL transports ballots to Voting Centers

Comment: MINUSTAH will have a slim margin of error to distribute ballots to the countryside. In the last phase, UNPOL will only have two days to deliver the ballots from the 11 BEDs to the 9,200 voting sites.

14. Personnel

The CEP, MINUSTAH and OAS must hire and train nearly 40,000 poll workers for election day. MINUSTAH hired 48 supervisory trainers from among the best OAS registration staff and trained them in Port-au-Prince. Subsequent training of 308 regional trainers hired by the OAS, BEDs and BECs ended December 2. These regional trainers are scheduled to train the 805 voting center managers December 19 - 23. The managers will then train the 9,200 voting site presidents, chosen by the BEDs and BECs, in two rounds of two days each between December 25 and January 1. The presidents will then train the remaining three poll workers per voting site in the first days of 2006.

Key Deadlines:

- December 19 - 23: Training for voting center managers
- December 24: First group of voting site presidents hired
- December 26 - 27: First round of Voting Site Presidents trained
- December 26: Second group of voting site presidents hired
- December 28 - 29: Second round of Voting Site Presidents trained
- December 29: All Poll workers hired
- January 1 - 5: All voting site personnel trained

Comment: The most challenging aspect of this complicated and compressed training scheme is the hiring of the roughly 40,000 election day poll workers. This task is inherently sensitive. BED and BEC authorities will want to have a hand in the process to take care of family and friends and to curry favor locally; poll workers have also historically been used to influence voting. MINUSTAH elections officials want to proceed with extreme caution in relying on BED or BEC personnel to complete poll worker hiring, fearing both favoritism and inefficiency.

15. Partial Electoral Lists

The OAS and CEP closed the electoral list, which includes all voters, and divided it into 9,200 partial electoral lists (LEP), one for each voting site. The OAS began printing the LEPS December 5. According to OAS elections chief Elizabeth Spehar, it will take twelve days to print two sets of 9,200 LEPS, a copy for each voting site and a backup for each BEC. The CEP will hold an electronic copy of the master list. MINUSTAH estimates that it will need five days to distribute the LEPS.

Key Dates

- December 17: Finish Printing LEPS
- December 18: Distribute LEPS

16. Transmitting the Results and Counting the Votes

CEP and MINUSTAH officials agree that vote counting should be centralized in Port-au-Prince, but disagree about how voting data should be transmitted to the capital. MINUSTAH has rented a warehouse in Port-au-Prince for vote counting. They plan to equip the center with an internal network of computers and facilities so that the media, political parties and dignitaries can watch the vote count. However, there is disagreement about how the results will arrive in Port-au-Prince. CEP member Francois Benoit and the IGOH advocate transmitting the results directly from the BECs to the counting center using a network of computers with satellite connections. The Ministry of Interior installed some computers and satellite dishes around the country, but is not close to finishing the installation. Meanwhile, MINUSTAH and CEP DG Bernard believe results should be taken to Port-au-Prince by land and air transport. They say the satellite transmission system will create more problems than it solves because Haiti's weak infrastructure will make the system prone to failure.

Key Dates

- ASAP: Method for transmitting results chosen
- ASAP: Logistical plan for transmitting results finalized

-- December 26: Counting center fully operational

Comment: We believe that elections results should be brought to Port-au-Prince by land and air. Haiti's decrepit infrastructure makes a failure in some part of the satellite transmission system likely, meaning MINUSTAH would in any case have to plan to physically retrieve results at any given BEC on short notice. Because elections spoilers will likely use any delays and/or irregularities to fuel claims fraud, MINUSTAH, the CEP and IGOH should focus on creating a realistic and foolproof transmission system. End Comment.
CARNEY